

The Curse of the Night Fury

by Dinosaur Barbecue

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Summary: Five years after the death of Mor'du, tragedy strikes the Vikings of Berk and a startling revelation threatens everything Hiccup ever knew to be true. Meanwhile, DunBroch is threatened on all sides by restless kings and ancient sorcery, forcing Merida, Hiccup, and Astrid to once again unite in the face of a powerful foe. Sequel to TLOTL, HTTYD 2 spoilers major character death.

1. Chapter One

Chapter One

The sky above was thick with clouds, blocking out the stars, and contrasting with the sleepy, snowy hills that overlooked Castle DunBroch. Both Castle and village were deceptively still, the only signs of life the candles glowing faintly in each window. Anybody who approached the Castle from the loch that lapped at the cliffs directly below its fortifications would have seen a similar wall of candles, adapted from a tradition meant to guide wanderers indoors on cold winter nights.

Deep within the sturdy stone walls of the castle, a tall, brightly bushy-haired young woman made her rounds, dutifully moving from room to room to fill the windows with light. A small creature on her shoulder accompanied her, chirping cheerfully. Winged and reptilian, it had to be one of the few mysterious dragons that had returned to DunBroch after the dreaded Mor'du had been defeated. But unlike her enormous counterpart, Sorchu could not breath fire, but watched with fascination as Merida touched unlit candles to the lit one in her hand.

Realizing that she had come to the last window, Merida paused, looking out onto the black, quiet surface of Loch Na Keal, searching for a disturbance, or a sign that the person she had put the candles out for would see them. But, like every year, for the past five years, her mother still did not appear.

"Well, Sorch," Merida said finally, straightening her shoulders.
"Let's see how Da is doing, shall we?"

It was the first time he had not joined her on her pilgrimage through DunBroch Castle. Losing his wife had been hard on the Bear King, and as the land around DunBroch had begun to recover from the destruction left by Mor'du, he had started to fade. His huge frame was no longer commanding, and the white in his hair had drained all color from his face. He spent less time hunting and more time at prayer in the castle's new chapel. Merida believed that perhaps he-and the entire castle itself-would liven up a little if her brothers were still around. But after the fiasco arising from her refusal to marry any of the sons of her father's vassals, a gesture of unity among the three kingdoms was still needed, and they had sent each of the triplets to live with the lords MacGuffin, Macintosh, and Dingwall. At first, Merida had welcomed the freedom to roam the castle without the boys underfoot, but now her days were long and lonely. Sorch helped, at times, but since her mother had gone, things had not been the same.

She found her father in his room, settled in a chair before the fire, draped in a bearskin, just as she'd left him. Though now he was snoring-so loud, in fact, it was no question where he'd gotten the nickname of Bear King. Smiling to herself, Merida adjusted the blanket, and tossed more logs on the hearth. Unlike the newer section of the castle, this part of Dunbroch was practically ancient, and much draftier. Once she was certain her father was nice and cozy, Merida exited the room, and began to make her way to her own bed.

Her poor, sword-scarred four-poster, and most of her other possessions, had fallen into the loch along with the part of the castle destroyed by Mor'du, but she had made a new home at the top of Bran's Tower, which was still intact. It was bigger, and gave her a better view of both the sea and the land. Not to mention the trapdoor leading to the roof had been useful when her friends from the far north came to visit.

Astrid and Hiccup had not come to DunBroch since the first snows. Like her, they were needed at home to protect it during the winter. However, unlike her, they also had an advantage-their Berk was home to not only Vikings, but dragons. Bigger, fire-breathing species that could keep their human partners warm and help them hunt for food. All Merida had were her arrows, and while Sorch's poisonous saliva could help the little dragon take down pheasants or the occasional rabbit, the princess had taken it on herself to supply the castle's kitchens with bigger game. That, too, had become scarce with the arrival of the cold, forcing Merida to push Angus deeper into the dark, forested hills, among the eerie hollows and stoic menhirs that populated the island of Mull. Even there, where she could not see or hear the waters of the loch, Merida would remember Elinor, and her mother's stories of the ancient and magical history of their home.

She would be out there again tomorrow-which meant she'd best get to sleep now. Her bed was warm, and the night was calm. On the wall across the room, a tapestry hung, a portrait of her family as it had once been. Staring at it as she lay there, Merida was reminded of something, and leapt out of bed with a cry.

Sorcha, who had been curled up beside her, squawked an alarm and flapped clumsily to the foot of the bed, then crawled up the poster to give herself a better view of the room. Laughing, Merida said, "Aye, I'm sorry, wee one. I only just nearly forgot something."

Merida went to the dying fire and lit one of the candles waiting on the mantelpiece. Then she moved to the window, placing it in view of the loch. Softly, she said, "Happy Christmas," and pressed her fingers to the glass. As before-and as expected-she received no answer.

2. Chapter Two

Chapter Two

Hiccup sat back on his haunches and observed the brave new world before him. The misty groves of trees that spread in every direction were full of promise; in the distance, he could see the outline of jagged mountains, haloed by the light of the setting sun. He wanted to go further, but the short days of winter meant that he and Toothless couldn't go as far as they used to during the summers. And besides, he couldn't avoid his responsibilities back at Berk, and Astrid's still gods-awful yak-nog, forever.

In fact, he was surprised she hadn't followed on Stormfly, to drag him back to the village's Snoggletog celebrations. The other dragons should have been back from Egg Island with their hatchlings by now.

Perhaps they were simply caught up in the festivities, Hiccup mused, and shrugged. He leaned forward to draw this new area on his ever-growing map of the lands beyond Berk, then turned to his scaly partner to ask, "So, what're we going to call it?"

Beside him, Toothless was occupied with more pressing matters, and Hiccup said, "Itchy Armpit it is."

Dragons didn't really appreciate the finer points of cartography, as evinced by the various other discoveries that dotted the map, each similarly named after unflattering bodily functions. Hiccup smiled as he surveyed his ever-expanding map, then looked up, toward those far-away mountains. He was again filled with the longing that could only be soothed by flying on the back of dragons-to see new places, new people, new dragons. As he stood, he almost asked Toothless if he wouldn't mind if they flew a little farther, just over that first ridge, when the Night Fury stiffened. His nostrils flared and his ears quivered as he turned his head to stare into the distance.

At first, Hiccup was delighted. "What do you think, bud? Have it in you to go a little farther today?" But Toothless's reaction was not one of tongue-lolling eagerness, but of deeply disturbed agitation.

Quickly, Hiccup folded up his map and asked, "What is it, boy?" The dragon only growled low in his throat, and Hiccup felt a chill run up his spine. Something was wrong.

Throwing himself into the saddle, Hiccup latched his prosthetic leg

into the mechanism that would allow him to control Toothless's false fin, but hadn't even secured his safety line before the dragon took off into the sky.

He flew low, and as they skimmed the top of the trees Hiccup saw now that many had been pushed aside or knocked down by the passage of something _huge_-it had flattened a great swath of forest, scratches and burns on the trees meaning that dragons had definitely been here. But whatever had pushed through the woods had been bigger than the Green Death, bigger than Mor'du, and it had set Toothless on edge.

They followed the path of destruction to the rocky cliffs Hiccup had seen from their landing spot, where it turned to circle around and enter a wide valley. Here were more flattened trees, some still smoldering, and an enormous, jagged mass of...something rising from the center.

Toothless rose higher and as they neared, Hiccup realized that he was looking at gigantic spears of ice. He had never seen anything like it before, and was so busy trying to figure out what he was looking at that he didn't hear the shouts coming from far below. However, he did hear the familiar whistling of a bolas as it whipped through the air, aimed directly at his dragon.

Hiccup yelped as Toothless jerked sidewise to narrowly avoid the bolas, and a second net, launched from a platform of splintered wood half trapped in the ice several yards below. The abrupt movement took Hiccup by surprise, and he was loosed from the saddle, his safety line waving mockingly in the air in front of his face. His leg, too, slipped free of its lock and he tumbled downward, crashing into a spike of ice and sliding toward its base.

Toothless let out his own cries of alarm as he flapped helplessly, unable to remain aloft without Hiccup's aid. He hit the ice and dropped, smashing into the wooden platform where he was immediately jumped by several armor-clad men.

"Toothless!" Hiccup regained his footing, leaping from the ice to land on the platform, unsheathing his sword and flipped the switch that coated the blade in flame. Toothless flung off his assailants and reared up, his mouth glowing blue as he prepared to strike.

"Hold!"

Hiccup sidestepped warily, looking for the speaker. From among their attackers, one came forward, a broad shouldered young man probably not much older than himself. His clothes were of a make that Hiccup did not recognize, but the most striking thing about him was a the blue tattoo on his strong chin.

The other kept a hand on one of the two knives on his belt as he stepped around Hiccup, studying him like a dragon did their dinner. "And here I thought we were lost," he said, smiling hungrily. "But it appears our luck has turned. We meet at last, Dragon Conqueror."

Hiccup was having a hard time keeping an eye on the speaker and the other men that had weapons pointed at them. He counted at least a

dozen in the immediate area, and two or three more above, preparing net-launchers for another shot. He could see now the ruins of what looked like a wooden fortress buried deep in the ice, frozen like the fish in the lake during the harshest of winters. With Toothless still snarling beside him, Hiccup asked, "Do I know you?"

The other man kept on smiling. "No, but you will." He unsheathed his knife, and pointed to his own chest with it. "I am Eret, son of Eret. Master dragon trapper, second only to the Lord of the Aird. And you, you're Hiccup, and you've been a pain in my ass for long enough. Dragon trapping is hard enough work without do-gooder dragon riders sneaking in to rescue them."

Hiccup lowered his sword slowly, his interest piqued. "What are you talking about? I've never seen you before in my life."

Eret seemed to grow impatient. "Don't think just because you've got that ice-breathing giant on your team that you can just waltz in here like you own the place!" The other men stirred, brandishing their weapons as they agreed with their apparent leader.

Outnumbered and quite literally outgunned, Hiccup did not want the situation to turn to violence. He tried to get Eret to keep talking. "Ice-breathing giant? Giant what? Dragon?" Impossible. "I don't know what dragon riders you're talking about, but it isn't us."

"Enough," Eret snapped. He spread his arms, indicating his men. "We have nowhere to go, nothing to sell, and no heads to call our own! If we don't turn up with dragons, and fast..." He pushed aside the neckline of his tunic, exposing a nasty, badly healed scar on his chest. "My lord gave me this the last time I turned up with no dragons. You can be assured I won't make that mistake a second time."

He jerked his other hand down in a swift signal. Above, Hiccup heard the snap and twang of net-launchers and shouted, "Toothless!"

The Night Fury was quick to obey. He spat a blue wad of plasma-like fire upward, smashing through one of the ice spikes and sending it down onto the platform, where it smashed through the net-launchers and caught the leg of one dragon-trapper who had been too slow to get out of the way. By the time the trappers had recovered and regrouped, Toothless and Hiccup had disappeared, winging their way back toward Berk with still more questions than answers.

* * *

><p>They arrived at the eerily quiet Viking village just as the last of the sun began to slip below the horizon. Only the crackling of the fires in the giant raised braziers greeted them as Toothless came in to land.<p>

"Where is everybody?"

Hiccup's question was soon answered by a chorus of voices shouting his name and the rumbling of large feet running down the village's main thoroughfare. Snotlout, Fishlegs, and the twins all rounded a house, their faces painted in preparation for the dragon races that always took place on Snoggletog after the dragons returned. There was

something missing, though-rather, several somethings.

Where were the dragons?

His friends surrounded him, each shouting to be heard above the others, and very much terrified. That didn't sooth Hiccup in the least, since it took a _lot _to scare a Viking. Raising his hands, he yelled, "Hold on! Hold ON!"

The others shut their mouths.

"Okay." Hiccup exhaled, and leveled a finger at Fishlegs. He was even jumpier than usual. "What happened?"

"The dragons still aren't back," the other young man replied, wringing his hands. "Well, one dragon is, but the others are still gone. He's hurt, b-b-by somebody. Everybody's nervous, they've never been away this long before..."

Hiccup's eyes widened, and his heart began to race. "Who's hurt?"

"It's Skullcrusher."

Hiccup did not stay to hear anymore. He pushed Fishlegs aside and ran back the way his friends had come, Toothless leaping along beside him. He did not get far before he hit a wall of fur and leather-clad backs; the other Vikings had gathered in a wide circle at the village's center, filling the air with panicked whispers and the occasional cry of despair.

"Excuse me!" Hiccup shouted, but the men and women in front of him were too distracted to notice. Then, behind him, Toothless bellowed and crashed through the crowd like a flock of startled sheep. Hiccup followed, making the usual excuses he used whenever his dragon got too excited to remember his manners.

"Sorry! Excuse us! Dragon coming through... _Oh my Gods_."

The sight that awaited them was like something from a nightmare. An enormous Rumblehorn lay on his side, panting, his great eyes glassy as his head lay in Stoick's lap. The similarly huge Viking chieftain was uncharacteristically solemn as he stroked Skullcrusher's menacing jaw and promised him that everything was going to be fine.

But as Hiccup came around the beast's side, he could not be so sure. Skullcrusher's usually vibrant green scales were dull, and the plates of armor that protected the front of his body were scratched and bruised. His wings appeared to be undamaged, but as Hiccup touched the underside of one to lift it, Skullcrusher roared and thrashed, only Stoick's strong grip on his head keeping the larger dragon from slicing into the young man with his long, cruel teeth.

Toothless approached Skullcrusher cautiously, his wings pressed tightly to his sides, his head swung low as he made a muted rattling sound in the back of his throat. Hiccup had been around dragons long enough now to know that Toothless was attempting to comfort and calm Skullcrusher. It must have worked, because when he tried to move the dragon's wing aside again, he did not fight.

There was a collective gasp as Hiccup exposed Skullcrusher's softer, more vulnerable underside. Just below the shoulder, the dragon's leg had been cut deep, nearly to the bone, and his stomach had been pierced by five dark arrows. Blood still bubbled up sluggishly from the wounds, and Skullcrusher's labored breathing indicated that they caused him a great deal of pain.

After staring in disbelief for what seemed like an eternity, Hiccup came to and began barking orders. "Fishlegs! Where's Fishlegs?" The other rider appeared at his elbow. "Get the Book. Try to figure out if any of the arrows hit his organs, or anything. Somebody get some dragon nip, calm him down..."

He felt oddly detached from the horror of the situation, until another outcry rose up from the gathered Vikings. Following their pointed fingers, Hiccup saw the outlines of more dragons returning from Egg Island-but their flight was limping and slow, and there was far too few of them. Most noticeable was the absence of hatchlings.

"They're hurt!" He shouted. "Everyone, get ready!"

Several dragons plummeted from the sky, smashing into houses, too injured or exhausted to continue. More than a few couldn't even make it to the land, splashing into the cold, forbidding waters surrounding Berk. Their human counterparts rushed to the docks, climbing into boats to try and rescue their scaly friends before they sank beneath the waves forever.

The sinking feeling that had affected Hiccup since meeting Eret, son of Eret, threatened to swallow him up. A blonde young woman emerged from the chaos, the fear he felt plain on her face.

"Stormfly," Astrid said. "Stormfly's not here."

Hiccup set his jaw, nodded, his helplessness evaporating. He turned to his father, who was now helping Fishlegs treat Skullcrusher's injuries. "Dad. I'm going to Egg Island. I'm going to find out what's going on."

"Careful, son," Stoick advised. Hiccup climbed up onto Toothless's back, then pulled Astrid up behind him. Beneath him, he could feel Toothless's tension rising, like a tightly-wound spring.

"Okay, buddy, let's go."

* * *

><p>They smelled the smoke before they saw it, pulling off of Egg Island in the breeze. The sun had sunk halfway beyond the horizon, but as they came in to land, there was still enough light to see the disaster that awaited them.<p>

The still-burning wreckage of several boats floated between the rocks surrounding the island, along with the bodies of several dragons. Toothless balked, passing over the sulfurous hot spring once before Hiccup finally convinced him to touch down. He snarled and snapped, clearly put off by the death that had overtaken the dragon's breeding ground.

The corpse of a Gronkle bobbed in the central hot spring, its waters now dark with blood. Hiccup cringed, raising his hand to cover his mouth and block out the noxious smell. Astrid immediately began to run between the few fallen Nadders, shouting her dragon's name.

There were still too few dragons to account for the whole population of Berk, but Hiccup could not figure out where they possibly could have gone. Then, he saw between the bodies of dragons and in the wreckage of unfamiliar ships, broken weapons and torn-up nets. He recalled Eret, son of Eret, and his words. _Master dragon trapper, second only to the Lord of the Aird._

Toothless sidled up to a Monstrous Nightmare still trapped beneath one of those chain-lined nets, sniffing cautiously. Suddenly, the larger dragon whipped its head around, snapping and roaring, a weak jet of fire spewing from its mouthful of broken teeth. Only Toothless's quicker reflexes kept him from getting scorched, but Hiccup came running. He recognized the Nightmare, and felt his heart soar with relief. "Hookfang!"

The Nightmare growled, trying to curl himself protectively over the nest he had fallen to protect, then realized that Hiccup was not the terrible enemy. The young dragon rider put his arms around the beast's head, hugging as delicately as he could. "Oh, man, Hookfang. What happened here?"

Of course, the Nightmare could not answer. Astrid came around his other side, and Hiccup searched her face for news of Stormfly.

Astrid shook her head. "She's not here either. Neither is Meatlug, or Barf and Belch... Or the eggs."

Looking around, Hiccup saw that she was absolutely right. Not even a sliver of eggshell could be found on the island, which meant whoever had come for the dragons had made off with their eggs before they'd even hatched. But for what purpose?

He was about to tell her about his encounter with Eret when Hookfang coughed and retched. He vomited a dark wad of _something _onto Hiccup's lap-a mixture of fish remains, the bitten-off handle of a war axe, and a scrap of fabric. Gingerly, Hiccup picked it up and stretched it out, shaking it to free it of some gobs of spittle. Spreading it flat, they saw a tartan pattern, scorched by dragon fire along the edges, but still recognizable.

Several moments passed in silence before Hiccup looked up again. He stared at Astrid, who was still blinking at disbelief at the scrap at her feet. Finally, she murmured, "This isn't possible."

Hiccup reached out to stroke Hookfang's nose, pressing his lips together as he thought. Finally, he said, "Something's happening, Astrid. Something terrible. But I'm going to put a stop to it, if it's the last thing if I ever do."

* * *

><p>an: yeah my first go at this story was really terrible, but thank goodness for httpd 2. gonna use elements from

that, so spoilers ahead, but also deviate enough to follow through with my original idea (but much better this time, promise.) (i've also only seen httyd 2 once so i might not recall details/dialogue completely correctly.)

End
file.